



January 24th, 2006

SENATE ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
LEGISLATIVE NO. 3
DATE 1-24-07
BILL NO. SB 218

Mr. Chair, Members of the Committee,

My name is Sarah Cobler. I represent the Montana Conservation Voters and we stand today in strong support of SB218. Thank you, Sen. Lind for carrying this measure to call on the Board of Environmental Review to establish carbon sequestration standards.

Montana Conservation Voters is a statewide, grassroots membership organization that works to protect public health, clean air and water and access to public lands through political action.

We have a unique role in the legislative process among conservation groups, because we facilitate a process to prioritize legislation important to the broader community. This coalition currently consists of thirteen individual membership groups, and collectively represents about 40,000 conservationists around the state. This is important for you to know, because the broader community of conservation groups identified SB 218 as a priority bill.

Clean, reliable and affordable renewable energy should be the center piece of Montana's energy policy. If we're going to expand coal production and export it to other states, then as Gov. Schweitzer suggests, we must do it in a way that keeps Montana clean and beautiful. If we don't make sure new coal development happens on Montana's terms, coal companies will have no incentive to use new technologies like carbon sequestration and we'll see more of the same old dirty coal plants- with no benefits for Montana.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, current electricity generation is the largest single source of green house gas emissions, accounting for 32% of the total emissions annually in the United States.

We know global climate change is a serious problem. To be clear, any new coal production must be on Montana's terms- with zero emissions of global warming pollutants like carbon dioxide.

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In 2005, the 59th Legislature and the Governor's office showed tremendous leadership to promote the development of renewable energy by signing SB 415 into law. Renewable energy diversifies our energy supply and protects the rate payer while protecting Montana's clean air and water.

Montana voters want renewable energy as well. In the fall of 2006, Beldon Russonello and Stewart Research and Communications conducted a Montana voter survey on energy among 600 likely voters across the state.

The results of the energy poll are telling. 69% of respondents favored stricter anti-pollution requirements on power plants, and 60% of voters believed the state should cap carbon dioxide emissions to reduce global warming pollution.

Carbon sequestration for new coal fired power plants is an important step toward putting Montanans first in our state energy policy, but it is only one piece of the puzzle. As I've mentioned, Montanans want policies that diversify our energy supply by promoting clean and reliable renewable energy like wind power to generate electricity, and biodiesel to meet our transportation needs. We need SB 218 to define sequestration and settle some of the technical challenges demanded by this new technology. And finally, we must require through HB 282, sponsored by Ron Erickson, and in its first hearing on January 31st, that all new coal fired power plants fully sequester their carbon.

Thank you for your time. Please vote to pass SB 218.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Cobler', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Sarah Cobler

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